

Susan King

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Testimony to **Portland City Council** on the **Shelter to Housing Continuum Project**, **Recommended Draft**

These comments are based on my understanding of the specifics of the Shelter to Housing proposal and are limited to the issues of “temporary” shelters in open spaces and allowing tiny houses or RVs on any lot. There is no debate about the impact that homelessness is having on the livability of Portland or its effect on those who find themselves in those circumstances due to factors such as job loss, mental illness, loss of a spouse who provided financial support or substance abuse. Obviously, both elected officials, organizations and individual residents must contribute to solving the problem to the extent possible. What is needed is cohesive City policy regarding housing rather than the competing, inconsistent and discriminatory campaigns that have been and are being proposed. I cite below the current policies as examples and strongly oppose allowing camping in open space and allowing RVs and tiny houses on wheels on any lot. 1. At a time when Portland property owners have been asked to impose yet another tax to sustain our parks and preserve them for all to use, the Shelter to Housing would allow tents, yurts, cabins etc. in those same parks. Allegedly, according to the proponents of this new bond measure, there were insufficient funds for maintenance of our parks and open space. There was no discussion about needing additional funds to deal with trash and enforcement issues related to these temporary shelters. 2. The recently approved Residential Infill Project has the potential to significantly reduce the space formerly given to yards in single dwelling areas. Increased density has been touted as a necessity and even a benefit to the neighborhoods. At the same time, open space to provide relief from the built environment as been a consistent theme across city bureaus and espoused by many City elected officials. How then will children and others who want to enjoy open space be able to do so if parks become overrun with shelters? 3. Any discussion about how to address the homeless crisis includes references to necessities such as sanitation, personal cleanliness, “wrap around” services for those who wish them. How will that happen in a park without infrastructure to provide it? The recently approved housing bond which has yet to result in a clear plan for increasing housing that may address situations for some who are homeless is already available to use. Why not concentrate on making that a good, honest use of our taxes? 4. Public safety in our parks has been an issue for many years. How will allowing camping contribute to a safer Portland? 5. The City has not yet shown the will to deal with the growing number of trash filled camping areas. I use as an example the Oaks Bottom area with the paved trail along the Willamette. The hillside above that area is littered with trash thrown over the edge. Nothing is being done to preserve that scenic area by ensuring that those who litter are dealt with or that it is cleaned up. 6. Anyone wishing to build a single dwelling unit or even a duplex or triplex

must deal with strict stormwater, sewer and water services and pay significant costs to do so. How will allowing RVs and tiny houses on wheels, with weak language about the requirement for these dwellings be anything other than discrimination against those who wish to build? In a recent conversation with a Land Use Committee about this proposal, the staff member stated that his agency didn't deal with enforcement. Who is going to deal with problems such as sewage, water usage etc.? Again I strongly urge you to reject at least the elements of the proposal that I have listed above.

Testimony is presented without formatting.